

### III. Project Plan Concept and Design Parameters – Proposed Action Plan

#### A. Project Plan Design Objectives

##### 1. Users

A variety of recreational groups have been identified as users of the South Park area of the Snake River. These include, but are not limited to, boat and bank anglers, scenic floaters, hikers, wildlife watchers, sightseers and picnickers. In addition to the recreational uses, commercial gravel extractors also use this area of the Snake River for their operations. Due to the high visibility of the BLM site from Highway 189/191 and the improved access provided by the plan, several user-groups have been identified as prospective users of the new South Park River Access. These prospective users include day-users, tourists/ travelers, commuters/park-and-ride, kayakers, hikers, and cyclists. The initial goal of this plan is to provide the public with safe river access. Full build-out as envisioned by the conceptual site plan would accommodate all of the existing and anticipated future users, and provide the appropriate facilities necessary for each group. It should be noted, however, that the site may not ever be developed to the level depicted on the conceptual site plan.



Guided River Floaters Launching onto Snake River from Von Gontard's Landing

#### Approximate Recreation Carrying Capacity

It has been estimated that boats account for at least 25,000 user-days on the section of the Snake River upstream of the South Park Bridge (BLM stat.). The majority of this user activity usually occurs during a 5 month period from May - September, with several spikes in high use periods around the holiday periods of summer.

## Recreation Experience

In the federal Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), the level of development included in this plan would be classified as “R” or “Rural”. Several items contribute to a classification of this nature: the site provides the opportunity to observe and affiliate with other users; the natural environment is culturally modified yet attractive; interactions between users may be high; there are obvious and prevalent on-site controls; and

access and travel facilities are for individual intensified motorized use.



View of Teton Range from project area

### Future Non-Recreation Uses

Currently, there is one non-recreational commercial use that takes place on the BLM parcel. The Evans Construction gravel operation holds a permit to access a dredging area on private property adjacent to the southeast boundary of the BLM parcel. Evans Construction has an easement through the BLM property for gaining access to the dredge-haul operation area. It is understood that this annual operation will continue into the foreseeable future. The spatial and access needs of the commercial operation are incorporated into the plan.

Additional future non-recreation use may include the use of the site as a park-and-ride facility by commuters from the Alpine/Hoback Junction area. The plan could accommodate the park-and-ride with no modification if the parking lot on the west side of the site was designated for this use.

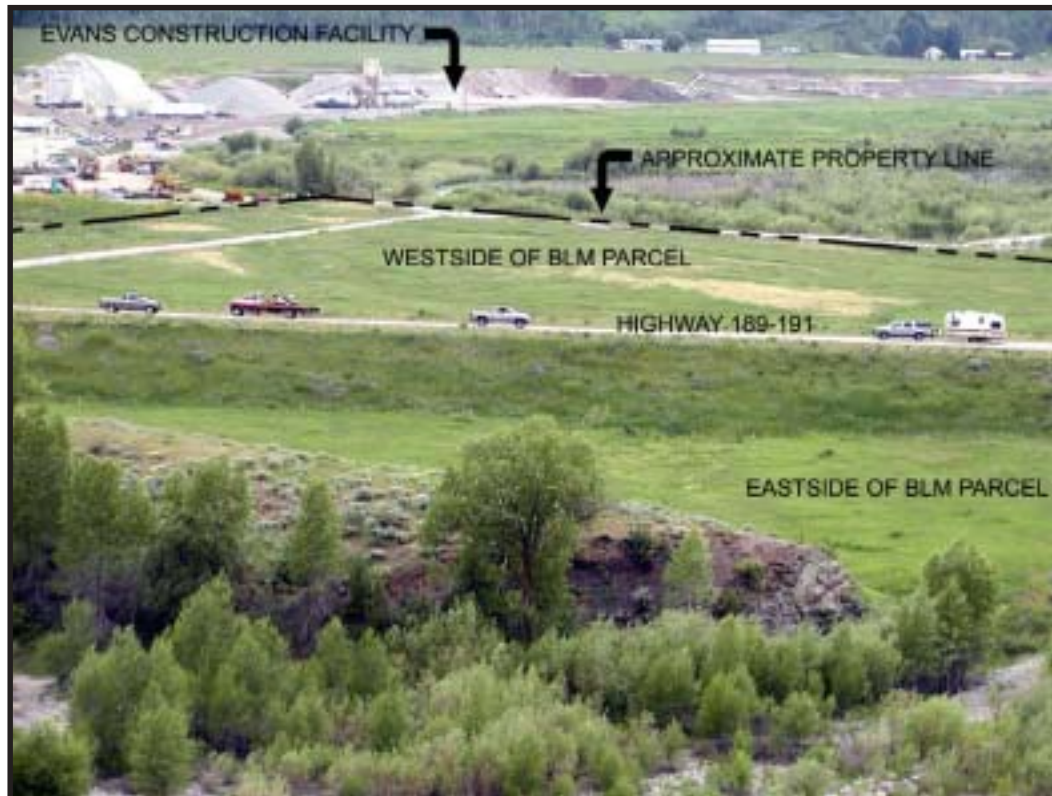
## 2. Cultural/ Social

Traditional use at the Von Gontard’s Landing river access site has contributed to a sense of “public ownership” of the river access. Longtime river users have established a sense of attachment to the access, and show some reluctance to change the location of the access.

The project area would address sensitivity to existing landowners in the vicinity of the BLM site. There are some homeowners in close proximity to the site, across the river, who’s viewshed includes portions of the BLM parcel. The proposed plan would address the viewsheds of adjacent homeowners, and mitigate impacts as needed. The Evans Mobile Home Park is south and adjacent to the east side of the BLM parcel. Improvements on the east side of the BLM parcel have the potential to impact residents of the mobile home park. The proposed plan mitigates these potential visual impacts.

The Evans Construction gravel operation is adjacent to the south boundary of the west side of the BLM parcel. The proposed site plan would not interfere with the commercial operation, or cause any long term effects on property values should the land use change for the Evans Mobile Home Park.

An archeological site has been identified on the east side of the BLM parcel, located on the northeast edge of the natural earth berm. Though it has been deemed insignificant, the proposed plan does not affect the archaeological site. Possibilities exist for interpretation and river overlook opportunities near the archeological site.



View west over project area from across the Snake River

### 3. Circulation

Providing adequate and safe circulation for river access is a major goal of this plan. Implementing a pedestrian and vehicular circulation system that avoids user conflict is the foremost component of creating a functionally successful alternative.

The Highway 189/191 corridor is a major north-south route through western Wyoming, carrying 1.9 million vehicles annually, with an average of 5301 vehicles per day (WYDOT 2002 traffic counts). The route is popular with recreational vehicles (RV's) on their way to or from Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Park to the north. The highway is also used frequently by construction vehicles and semi tractor-trailers. Vehicles commuting between the towns of Alpine and Jackson also add significantly to the traffic volume on this stretch of highway. The combination of heavy traffic and large vehicles make Highway 189/191 a safety concern when considering the development of the BLM South Park parcel as a public river access site.



Vehicles accessing Von Gontard's Landing do so without the benefit of turning lanes or acceleration/deceleration lanes. Vehicles entering from the north must slow down quickly on a down-hill slope prior to entering the existing access road. Vehicles approaching from the south must stop and wait for clear traffic prior to making a left turn into the site, often slowing or stopping traffic behind them on the approach to the hill north of South Park Bridge. Vehicles exiting the Von Gontard's Landing site are faced with a very steep approach to the highway, providing limited sight distance and slow acceleration into traffic, that is often moving at high speed. These vehicle access issues at Von Gontard's Landing create a safety concern for site users and traveling motorists.

The plan incorporates highway safety as a significant design component. Site egress/ingress would be much safer for highway travelers compared to the current situation at Von Gontard's Landing. The plan also makes allowances for a grade-separated pedestrian and bicycle access, to provide a safe entry to the site from proposed Teton County regional trail systems.

#### 4. Facilities

Though the existing Von Gontard's Landing river access accommodates many user groups, this plan was developed with the primary intention of providing safe and efficient river access for users, specifically boaters. Float fishing and scenic float trips require specific needs including large vehicle circulation, river access points, changing rooms, and restroom facilities. In addition, the preferred plan would provide all of the needed facilities for other groups such as hikers, wildlife watchers, picnickers, kayakers, cyclists, tourists/travelers and commuters.

#### 5. Environmental/ Natural

Several environmental issues influenced the development of the plan for the river access facility at South Park. Prior to the construction of US Hwy 189/191, the Snake River in this vicinity likely had a much different character. The Snake River's natural stream geomorphology has been altered by decades of land use changes, flood control and irrigation diversion improvements. The result has been an altered hydrological and riparian system.

There are several areas of environmental sensitivity on the site, primarily on the east side of Hwy 189/191. Site specific items include, but are not limited to: a large and mature cottonwood gallery, juvenile successive riparian plant species, upland sagebrush areas, and natural earthforms. There is a significant wildlife concern regarding the protection of the local Bald and Golden eagle populations. Nest sites are known to exist within one mile upstream and one mile downstream of the project area. The South Park Bridge is believed to mark the division between the feeding ranges of these nesting eagles. Other environmental concerns include erosion and sediment discharge issues from the west side of the BLM parcel, along the river's cutting edge.

Although the federal government is not required to adhere to local land use regulations, it has been recommended that the BLM adopt Teton County's river setback regulation of 150 ft. This would require any permanent site feature or improvement to be located at least 150 ft. away from the river's edge. Any encroachment on this regulation in the proposed plan would be accomplished with appropriate mitigation.



View southwest over project area, with Evan's Construction facilities in background.

Another objective of the plan is to protect prominent existing natural site features. The plan would provide a high level of sensitivity to the environmental conditions on the site, particularly resource protection, while creating new opportunities for ecological balance and habitat enhancement.

## B. Design Concept Overview

The objective of this Recreation Project Plan is to accommodate existing recreational and non-recreational users of this section of the Snake River. The plan also makes provisions for anticipated future recreational and non-recreational users. The site plan contained in this document is conceptual in nature and is intended to serve as a guideline for future development. The actual development phasing will be subject to current and future funding priorities, level of use and agency management. The site may or may not be developed to the level depicted on the site plan.

Because the site is bisected by Highway 189/191, the plan establishes two distinct use areas (Figure 6). The eastside of the highway would primarily serve watercraft-related users and would provide two boat launch areas, parking, restrooms, changing rooms, a picnic area and trails. The west side of the project area would be developed as a "gateway park" which would include a visitor's center, picnic shelter, restrooms, parking, regional trail connections, and non-boat river access. An underpass below Highway 189/191 would connect the two sides of the project area and provide visitors with a safe passage between the two areas. The underpass also allows for right-in/right-out access to the project area from both the northbound and southbound lanes of the highway, minimizing left-turn movements into the site.

The plan is designed to be implemented in phases based on current and projected user need. Phase 1 would encompass a majority of the improvements recommended for the east side of the site as well as the construction of Highway 189/191 improvements at the entrance to the property. Phase I would include developing the raft drop-off and pick-up area and associated access drive, constructing the main parking area, and planting screening vegetation along both sides of the highway and on the eastside of the project area. Phase 2 would include developing the hard-hulled boat ramp and associated access drive and installing the additional parking area. Phase 3 would focus on developing the west side of the project area. Improvements for this phase would include developing the parking area and circulation routes, installing the picnic shelter and tables, constructing the river access trails and beach area, and planting the screening vegetation. Installing the underpass would encompass Phase 4. Phase 5 would complete the project with the construction of the visitor's center and associated sidewalks and plantings. The proposed connection to the regional bicycle/pedestrian trail would have to be developed when Teton County constructs the trail through the site.

## C. Design Details

### Facilities

The river user groups outlined above have special needs that should be accommodated by the South Park River Access area. These include: adequate access for large vehicles and vehicles with trailers, boat launch and landing, changing rooms, air pump, and boat staging areas. The provision of these items would promote site efficiency during transition periods, when river users are “putting in” or “taking out” of the river. In addition to these facilities, other features have been incorporated for the benefit other current and future users. These items include: parking lots, restroom/changing room facilities, a visitor center, informational kiosks, shade structures and picnic tables, connections to the proposed regional bicycle/pedestrian trail, bicycle racks, drinking water supply, and appropriate signage throughout the site.

The primary boat take-out/launch area has been located on the southeast portion of the parcel, incorporating the existing gravel bar area (Figure 7). The nature of the gravel material gives this area a high level of resiliency to human impact and the size of the area is suitable for staging multiple watercraft simultaneously. The gravel area is also suitable for pulling into and out of the water current due to the relatively slower water speeds on this interior bend of the river (see Figure 8). A large lagoon area located immediately adjacent to the gravel bar on the BLM parcel would provide even calmer waters for people to put-in and take-out boats. The proximity of the lagoon to the BLM property and the calmer waters found there may be a natural attraction to river users. Because the gravel extraction operations occur in the winter for the most part, this lagoon would be relatively safe for recreational users. An agreement would have to be arranged between the BLM and the Evans Construction Company regarding the use of this site by recreationists.

A hardened boat ramp is also recommended as a future phase of the plan (for more on phasing, refer to section IV.C: Project Development Phasing Outline). This ramp would be located immediately adjacent to the east side of the South Park Bridge, and would serve only as a launch site, as river conditions at this point on the riverbank are not favorable for landing a watercraft. This secondary launch would serve as a hard-hulled boat ramp, where users could back their boat trailers directly down to the water on a hardened surface (Figure 9). Development of this proposed secondary launch would involve the excavation of a portion of the riverbank in order to create a lagoon suitable for launching.



Figure 7



Figure 8

The west side of the site has been designed as a future “gateway park” for the Jackson Hole region. The gateway park concept would provide a point of first contact for travelers entering the region from the south and would include a visitor’s center, restrooms, picnic areas, an information kiosk, non-boat river access and pedestrian/bicycle trails with a connection to the planned regional trail. A limited amount of turf area could also be located near the visitors center and the picnic area in order to provide for a more user-friendly park experience. The visitors center could house interpretive displays, travel information, vending, area maps, and restrooms. The proposed location of the visitors center provides unobstructed views up the Snake River corridor to the Teton Range from the interior of the building.

The plan incorporates restroom facilities both the east and west sides of the site. All restrooms should have a vault waste collection system, rather than a septic system, due to the proximity of these facilities to the flood plain. It will be necessary to conduct a geotechnical study prior to siting the restrooms in order to ensure

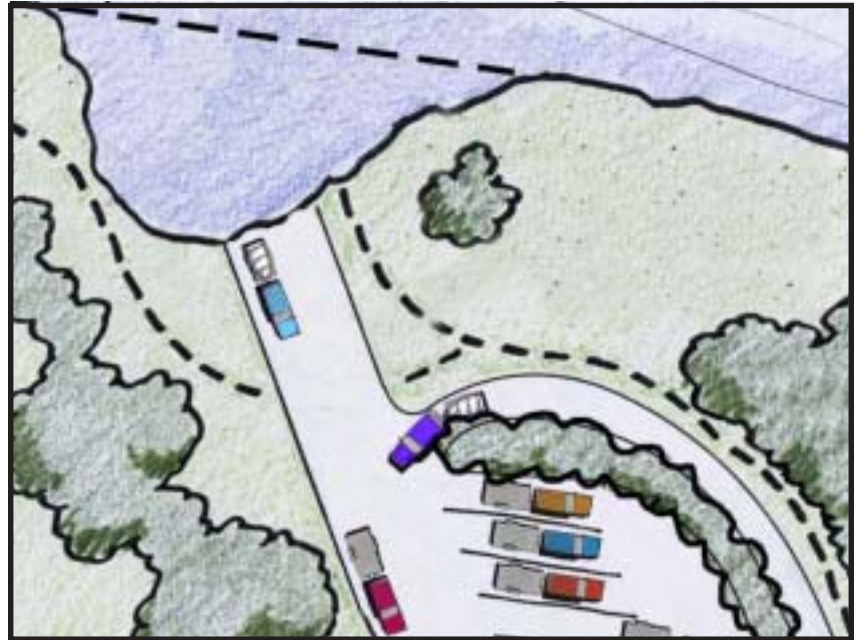


Figure 9

that groundwater contamination will not be a concern. Restrooms should be gender specific, and have two stalls each in order to accommodate periods of high use. The restrooms on the west side of the site would be a component of the proposed visitor’s center, and would be developed as part of Phase 5. One of the restroom facilities on the east side should contain a built-in storage facility for maintenance equipment and supplies. This restroom would be installed as part of Phase 1.

Changing rooms should be incorporated into, or be located within close proximity to, the restroom facilities on the east side of the site (Figure 10). The changing rooms are also listed as part of Phase 1. Changing rooms should also be incorporated as part of the visitors center on the west side of the site. The changing rooms should be gender specific and would allow river users to change clothes prior to, or upon completion of, a river trip.

Picnic facilities are proposed for both sides of the site. On the west side a picnic shelter is proposed as a component of the “gateway park”. The shelter has been located close to the visitor center, and is large enough to accommodate several picnic tables (Figure 11). The shelter is also sited to provide views of the Snake River and mountains beyond. Picnic tables are also proposed for the east side of the project area, and are centrally located near the main parking area. Two small shelters should be provided in this location.

Two information kiosks have been incorporated into the plan; one on the east side of the project area and one on the west side of the project area. They have been centrally located in areas of high pedestrian traffic. The kiosks should be vertical structures constructed of natural materials, such as wood, and have enough surface area to display pertinent information.



Bicycle racks should be located in two locations: one on the east side of the project area near the restroom and changing facilities, and one on the west side of the project area near the visitor center. In order to avoid cyclist/pedestrian conflicts, bicycle racks should not be located in the direct flow of pedestrian traffic. Racks should be secured to the ground, preferably with concrete, and be vandal-proof.

#### Amenities

A potable water supply should be developed on both sides of the project area. This would provide area users with drinking and washing water.



Figure 10

A sound muffled air pump should be located near the boat take-out/launch area on the east side of the project area. The air pump would facilitate an efficient preparation process for those preparing to launch inflatable watercraft into the river, as well as reduce congestion and increase the overall efficiency of the boat launch area.

Appropriate signage should be developed for both sides of the project area. Site signage would promote safe and efficient use of the roadways and parking lots. Signs indicating pedestrian paths, bicycle paths, trails, picnic areas, and pet-walking areas should also be incorporated.

#### Circulation

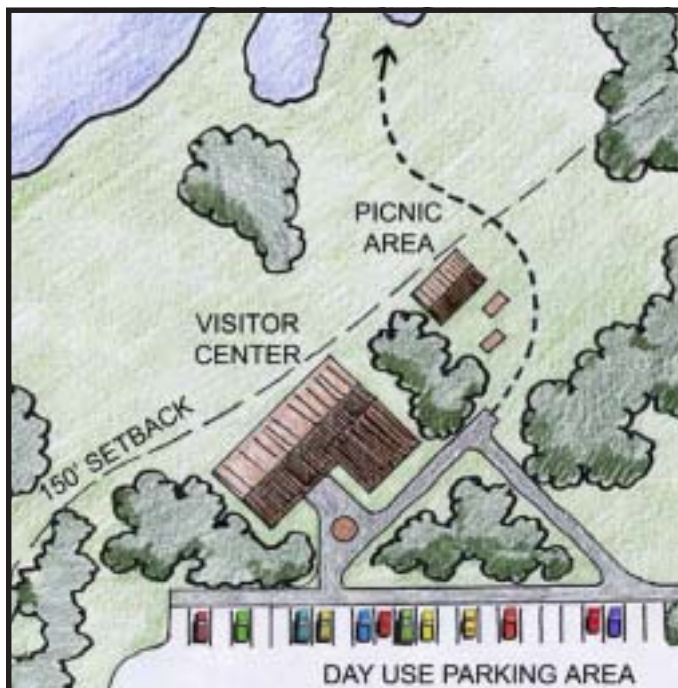


Figure 11

The pedestrian and vehicular circulation routes have been designed to provide safety efficiency to users, while maintaining the integrity of the natural resources. The plan retains the existing intersection on Hwy 189/191 as the main access point to both the east and west sides of the site, due to its location away from the South Park bridge, and its allowance for optimum highway sight distance.

The east side of the project area would contain the river access facilities and amenities. Access to the gravel beach boat launch area been designed as a one-way approach (Figure 12). This would allow users that want to access the boat launch area to pull into the site and proceed directly to it. Following launching, vehicles continue along the one-way loop to the



designated parking area. The parking area would contain 10 regular-sized parking spaces as well as 17 oversized parking spaces (12 X 50 feet) to accommodate vehicles pulling trailers. There is a second one-way loop that serves the hard-hull boat launch. This loop can be accessed by either driving directly through the parking lot, or by following the loop that accesses the gravel boat launch area. Other user groups can by-pass the boat launch areas and proceed directly to the parking area. This configuration minimizes potential vehicular conflicts that may arise between different user groups.

The west side of the project area would contain the visitor center and picnic shelter, trailhead and additional parking, as well as a possible park-and-ride lot that would serve users commuting from the Hoback Junction area. Access to this side of the project area is via the existing intersection on the highway. The parking area would be accessed by two separate spurs from the main access road. The parking area would contain five dedicated regular-sized trailhead parking spaces, located in the northeast corner of the parking area to serve those using the proposed regional pedestrian/bicycle trail system (which will parallel Highway 89/191). The parking area would also contain 18 oversized spaces (12 x 50ft.), to accommodate RV's and vehicles pulling trailers, and 50 regular-sized spaces. The west side parking area also has the ability to be expanded if use levels dictate. The plan incorporates an underpass/tunnel in order to provide safer pedestrian and vehicular access to both sides of the project area. This grade-separated underpass of Highway 189/191 would reduce vehicular conflicts at the current intersection, and provide a much safer passage for automobiles, bicyclists, and pedestrians. The underpass would also promote a right-turn-only scenario to and from Hwy 189/191, as well as allow easy access for spillover parking from one side of the project area to the other.

## Trails

In order to provide appropriate pedestrian access to the various portions of the project area, the plan includes a network of ADA accessible soft surface foot trails. A paved trail connection through the highway underpass/tunnel would provide pedestrians and cyclists with safe access to both sides of the project area. Other trails would include: sustainable riverside fishing trails, connection paths from the launch area to parking, and trail connections to proposed Teton County regional trails.



Figure 12

## Site Features

The plan has been designed to preserve the existing natural features within the project area. The prominent ridge on the east side of the site and all of the existing mature trees are not affected by the site plan. Major disturbance areas, such as parking lots, are concentrated to the existing flatter open areas of the site. A majority of the access roads within the project area utilize existing road alignments. The plan also incorporates large areas of new tree plantings. These new plantings will not only allow the site to blend into the river corridor, but will also provide users with a more naturalistic setting by screening unwanted views from the site to neighboring properties and the highway. The screening plantings will also help protect the viewsheds of nearby private property owners. It will be necessary to develop an irrigation system to establish and maintain this new vegetation.



View of existing access road to east parcel through cottonwood trees

## IV. Project Development Overview

### A. Required Administrative Actions

The South Park River access site will provide needed amenities to the area and resolve current safety issues associated with the Von Gontard's Landing access site. There is a high level of public interest in initiating the development of the site as planned. The BLM may want to consider forging a partnership with Teton County in order to secure additional funding sources to expedite the development process. BLM staff should also stay in contact with the representatives in Teton County who are working on the proposed regional bicycle/pedestrian trail in order to coordinate the development of the related facilities on the BLM site.

Coordination will also be important regarding the development of the proposed underpass/tunnel below Highway 189/191. WYDOT is planning on replacing the South Park Bridge and construction

of the tunnel on the BLM site should occur concurrently. BLM staff will have to maintain contact with WYDOT during the development of the design for the new South Park bridge and highway approach to ensure that WYDOT officials are aware of BLM intentions and ensure that the tunnel is compatible with the improved bridge/roadway. The river front trail that crosses below the South Park Bridge should also be considered when WYDOT is designing the bridge upgrade.

#### **B. Required Interim Use Supervision**

Prior to the initiation of the improvements in the project area, the BLM should continue the current management program for the area. Upon the implementation of the development, an ongoing monitoring system should be established in order to assess visitor levels as phasing of the plan is based partly on use levels. This monitoring may include traffic counts, user surveys, and user counts conducted by BLM staff.

#### **C. Project Development Phasing Outline**

The plan is designed to be implemented in phases based on current and projected user need. Current user levels on this stretch of the Snake River dictate the need to concentrate the majority of the development in the immediate future to river recreation related facilities. This would encompass most of the development planned for the east side of the site. The development planned for the west side of the site is oriented more towards passive recreational use and cultural facilities. The phasing plan outlined below follows this general east/west development pattern.

##### **Phase 1:** Initial development of the east side facilities.

Survey: Survey the project area to 1' contours. 1' contours will be required due to proposed tunnel, associated drainage and sensitivity of the riparian nature of the property.  
Geotechnical survey of site to identify geologic constraints.

Landscape Architect/Engineer: With BLM oversight, design development and construction drawings for: ingress/egress improvements on Highway 189/191, the raft drop-off and pick-up area and associated access drive, the main parking area, picnic shelters/tables, trail system, restrooms/changing rooms, the planting plan for the eastside and the screening vegetation along the highway on the westside of the project area, water source development and irrigation system.

Construction Contractor: Install the above improvements with BLM oversight.

##### **Phase 2:** Further development of the east side facilities:

Landscape Architect/Engineer: With BLM oversight, Design development and construction drawings for: the hard-hulled boat ramp and associated access drive, air pump, and the parking area expansion.

Construction Contractor: Install the above improvements with BLM oversight.

##### **Phase 3:** Initial development of the west side facilities.



Landscape Architect/Engineer: With BLM oversight, Design development and construction drawings for: the parking area and vehicular circulation routes, the picnic shelter and tables, the river access trails and beach area, and a planting plan for the screening vegetation on the southern and western portions of the property.

**Phase 4:** The underpass linkage between the east and west side.

Engineer/Landscape Architect: with BLM oversight, Design development and construction drawings for the tunnel .

Construction Contractor: Install the above improvements with BLM oversight.

This phase will require considerable consultation/coordination with WYDOT

**Phase 5:** Project completion.

Architect/Landscape Architect: With BLM oversight, Design development and construction drawings for the visitor's center, site plan (building location) and associated sidewalks and landscaping.

Special Note: The proposed connection to the regional bicycle/pedestrian trail should be developed when Teton County constructs the trail through the site. This construction could occur during any of the above phases and could be partially paid for by Teton County. Coordination with Teton County for this portion of the development is critical.

#### D. Project Development Schedule Outline

Phase	East Side	West Side
<b>Phase 1</b>	Survey project area to 1 foot contours Design and Construction of: main launch/take-out area, access road, main parking area, restrooms/changing rooms Highway 189/191 egress/ingress improvements, planting of native vegetation, development of a water source and installation of an irrigation system.	Planting of screening vegetation along Highway.
<b>Phase 2</b>	Design and Construction of: hard-hulled boat ramp and access road, additional parking area, air pump and water supply.	Construction of drinking water supply stub-out for future visitors center.
<b>Phase 3</b>	No Development	Design and Construction of: parking area and vehicular circulation routes, picnic shelter and tables, river access trails and beach, and planting of the remainder of site vegetation (except landscaping for visitors center).
<b>Phase 4</b>	Design and Construction of underpass/ tunnel connection to west side.	Design and Construction of: underpass tunnel connection to east side
<b>Phase 5</b>	No Development	Design and Construction of: visitor center, concrete pathways, visitors center landscaping, and connection to regional bicycle trail.

#### E. Recommended Method of Project Survey and Design

The goal of this Recreation Project Plan is to get the recommended improvements installed in a efficient and economical manner. Because the BLM Pinedale Field Office has limited resources due to their current project workload, it is recommended that the survey, design and construction of Phase 1, and possibly the entire project, be completed by independent contractors. Phases 2-5 may be accomplished by a combination of BLM personnel and contractors. The composition of the team should be determined based on the current and projected workload of the BLM office in charge of the work.

### **V. Preliminary Project Cost Estimates**

#### A. Phasing Construction Estimate

(Phasing Construction Estimate is located on the following pages)